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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BRUSSELS 000679

SIPDIS

STATE FOR EUR/WE, EUR/RPM, EUR/ERA, S/CT AND S/WCI

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TAGS: [PTER](#) [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [BE](#) [AF](#)

SUBJECT: GOB STILL WILLING TO CONSIDER RESETTLING
GUANTANAMO DETAINEES DESPITE INTELLIGENCE CHIEF'S DOUBTS

REF: A. BRUSSELS 648

[1](#)B. BRUSSELS 268

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Wayne Bush, reason 1.4(b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: Belgium remains supportive of U.S. efforts to resettle Guantanamo detainees and is willing to consider specific proposals for resettlement, according to the Prime Minister's diplomatic advisor Dirk Wouters. Wouters discounted comments by Alain Winants, Belgium's head of State Security, that Belgium and other countries should "think carefully" before taking on detainees for resettlement. Winants told a Reuters reporter that he is concerned that detainees from Guantanamo would have an inordinate influence on other Muslims living in Europe, and added that it is increasingly difficult for European security services to track and count militants, who avoid meeting in public places such as mosques. Winants subsequently told Charge that he had intended to send no political message by his comment and that he would work with European counterparts on effective information sharing concerning released detainees. We should continue to vigorously engage the Belgians on issues related to closure of Guantanamo. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (U) Reuters news agency published an interview with Alain Winants, administrator general of the Belgian state security service on May 11. In the interview, Winants is quoted as urging countries to think carefully about agreeing to take in prisoners from the U.S. detainment camp at Guantanamo. Winants is concerned that detainees from Guantanamo could have an "aura" about them that would give them a big influence among radical Islamists in Belgium and other European countries. Another such person, cited by Winants, is Malika El-Aroud, who has lived many years in Belgium and was a radical firebrand on the Internet. El-Aroud was arrested in December and is being held on suspicion of links to Al Q'aida terrorist activities. Winants said that he is worried about radicals using Pakistan as a base for training and then returning to Belgium. He claimed it is becoming increasingly difficult for the GOB to track and count such militants, because they now meet in homes rather than in mosques.

[1](#)3. (C) On May 12, Charge spoke to Dirk Wouters, Diplomatic Advisor to Prime Minister Van Rompuy. Wouters said that relevant Belgian cabinet members had discussed the Guantanamo detainee issue on May 11. He said that Belgian policy has not changed regarding the possibility of receiving detainees, that Belgium is open to working with the U.S. on this matter, and is ready to review and consider specific requests. He said that Prime Minister Van Rompuy and the Foreign Ministry both support assisting the United States, and that he would look for ways to correct any damage done by Winants' public statements. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is preparing a report for the cabinet on potential difficulties in accepting detainees and ways to overcome them, Wouters said. In a separate conversation on May 12, Francesca Bostyn, Security Advisor to the Prime Minister, told an Embassy political

officer that a working group is examining current Belgian legislation to determine what legal status a Guantanamo detainee might have in Belgium, including what restrictions could be put on freedom of movement and associations. She said that resettling detainees is a political decision and Winants' statements are not reflective of policy.

13. (C) After he spoke to Wouters, Charge talked directly to Winants. Winant said that what Reuters reported was a brief aside in an hour-long interview on radicalization, and was not intended as a political message. He said that two Guantanamo detainees previously released to Belgium, who are Belgian citizens, travel a lot, talk to others, and attract the interest of others, especially young people, by virtue of their experience in Guantanamo. He said that effective information sharing among Schengen countries on released detainees would be important given freedom of movement within the Schengen zone. Winants intends to work with other services in Europe to tackle problems, and he added that "it is not my intention to make difficulties."

14. (C) Comment: So far only Winants' comments on Guantanamo have been reported by Reuters. Despite his demurral, his comments do set him up in opposition to government policy as it has been stated to us by Prime Minister Van Rompuy in his May 5 meeting with the Charge (ref A), Wouters on May 12 and by Foreign Ministry and Interior Ministry officials who met with S/WCI Ambassador Williamson in February (ref B). While the comments may be a play for more resources for the state security, they probably also emanate from apprehension about increasing the population of radical Islamists in Belgium. Winants has given voice to doubts that exist among the

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Belgian public and even in the minds of the officials who clearly are disposed to be cooperative. It will be helpful to reassure the GOB, and when possible and appropriate the Belgian public, that the detainees offered by the United States will be low-risk and few in number. This report should not deter us from engaging vigorously with the Belgians on military detainees as soon as we are ready to do so.

BUSH

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